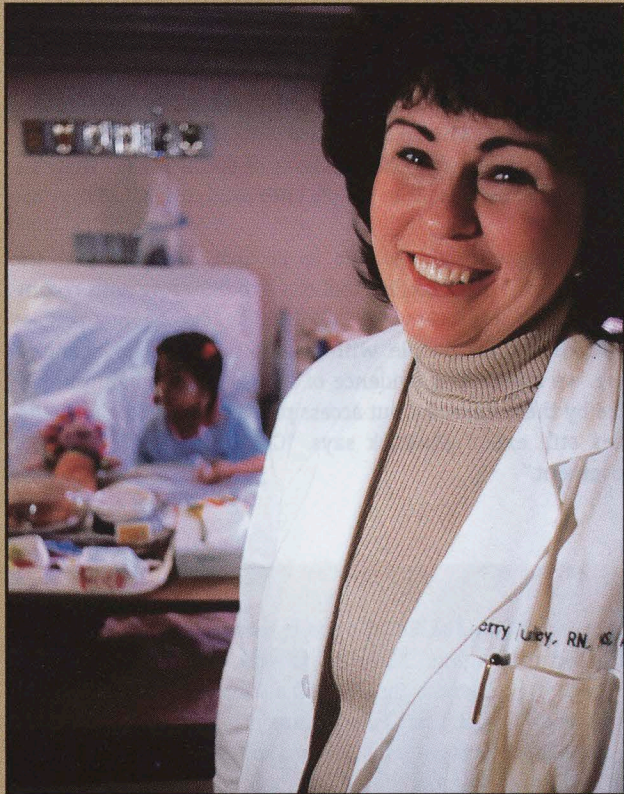


# Student Center



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**—Kerry Turley**

## A nursing student receives national honors

**K**erry Turley knows she does good work. The number of lectures she gives around the country, the joy on parents' faces when seeing their recovering children, and her own satisfaction tell her so. But she didn't know how good her work was. Until now.

Turley, a May graduate of the College of Nursing's Summer Limited Residency Program, received the prestigious Marie Hippensteel Lingeman Founders Award for Excellence in Nursing Practice, one of the highest awards bestowed by nursing honor society Sigma Theta Tau International. "I never would have dreamed this in a million years," says Turley, clinical nurse coordinator/case manager in the congenital and pediatric cardiovascular surgery service at California Pacific Medical Center in San Francisco. "There are so many wonderful nurses out there that I was honored just to be nominated."

Turley's fascination with cardiovascular surgery started when, as a young girl, she read the book *Hearts* about two cardiovascular surgeons. Her education took a circuitous path. She earned an associate's degree in nursing from Gloucester College, became a cardiac surgical nurse, obtained a bachelor's degree in social science from the University of Southern Florida, was a sales rep for artificial heart valve manufacturers, and finally secured a master's degree in public administration from Golden Gate University. Now she was positioned to go back into the hospital, right where she wanted to be.

At California Pacific Medical Center, Turley made major changes in pediatric cardiac surgery. She recognized that the hospital had to be competitive, with aggressive outcomes and early discharges. "But early discharges without good care are not right," she explains. She grasped that putting children in play clothes instead of hospital gowns immediately after surgery sends a strong message to parents, cardiologists, and the children themselves: the children will be OK. She dresses the children in their own clothes as soon as their chest tubes are removed and walks them into the waiting room. "You cannot imagine what it's like for a parent to see a child, who 20 minutes ago was connected to machines and tubes, in his own clothes with just an IV in. They look like they've just witnessed a miracle," Turley says.

Because she knew nurses are too busy for such routine tasks as walking recuperating children every hour, Turley began educating parents before surgery on ways they could help their children recover. She also leaves charts—personalized by each child's choice of stickers—in each room listing schedules for walks and medication. This gives parents needed information, and staff members read them more often because they are accessible.

Turley is on call 24 hours a day, without pay, to answer parents' questions once the children are discharged. "When a job is not a job, but your life, you give a lot," she says. "But what you're really doing is giving to yourself. Your life has a purpose."



For her final graduate project at Syracuse, Turley correlated data from follow-up questionnaires she sent to parents she worked with at California Pacific. "You'd be hard pressed to find one family who didn't love this," Turley smiles.

No one at the College of Nursing is surprised. Especially director of professional and graduate admissions Jan Pedersen, who wrote Turley a letter of recommendation for the award. "Kerry's down-to-earth and creative, humorous approach to children and their parents to decrease pain and length of stay are simple methods, yet so effective," she says. "Parent involvement is crucial, and Kerry possesses the caring, empathy, and teaching skills to promote that process."

The Founders Awards are named after the seven founding members of the international nursing honor society and recognize excellence in nursing practice, education, creativity, research, leadership, fostering professional standards, and chapter programming. The award was presented in Indianapolis in December. The College of Nursing and the Omicron Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau hosted a reception for Turley at Convocation.

Laura Mahlmeister, president of Sigma Theta Tau's San Francisco chapter, nominated Turley for the award, citing Turley's relevant contribution to excellence in clinical practice, particularly in an era of health care redesign and restructuring. "You have advanced the highest standards of nursing practice, expanded the knowledge base for the discipline of nursing, and improved the lives of patients with cardiovascular disorders across the globe," writes Mahlmeister, notifying Turley of the nomination. "You exemplify the finest characteristics of a professional nurse."

"When I got to Syracuse and learned about the college's philosophy of empowerment, I felt this is where I belong because that is my personal philosophy," says Turley. "I feel very lucky Syracuse University is in my life. Without it, I know none of this would be happening."

—MICHELLE MCGRATH

## Helping teen mothers improve their lives

**E**rin Killingsworth '98 is a remarkable student. She excels in her dual major in child and family studies in the College for Human Development and policy studies in The College of Arts and Sciences, and is also involved with many on-campus organizations. The Syracuse Women's Club recognized her with the Ruth Tolley Award for outstanding academic and community work.

But what is most remarkable about Killingsworth is her personal determination to tackle society's ills and make a difference in a very real way. To accomplish this, she and nine other students founded Project Nubia, a program that provides guidance and support to teen mothers.

According to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, more than 40 percent of young women in the United States become pregnant before they reach the age of 20, the highest rate of any industrialized nation. Killingsworth says both low self-esteem and the desire to please a teen boyfriend are key causes of teen preg-



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nancy. "We're concentrating on teen pregnancy because of its huge impact," she says.

Project Nubia originated in 1995 at Nottingham High School in Syracuse, after a school counselor asked Killingsworth and other SU students to help develop a program there. Today the project is affiliated with the Salvation Army.

Many of the teen mothers the students work with come from broken homes and low-income families. At the heart of Project Nubia is a commitment to building friendships with the teens and fostering self-esteem through workshops and such simple activities as movie nights at Killingsworth's apartment. "Each of us is a mentor, someone these young mothers can talk to about anything," Killingsworth says. "It's not like a counseling session; it's a laid-back, friendship-based thing."

The SU students involved in Project Nubia work one-on-one with the teen mothers, helping them improve their grades and learn about computers, even pitching in to baby-sit on occasion. "We want to stimulate their interests," Killingsworth says. "Our philosophy is: OK, so you have a child. Now how can we enrich your life? How do you go on to college?"

Killingsworth says typically the teen mothers are reserved at first, but open up during the course of the program. "These young women have little or no money and have ruled out any possibility of a career," she says. "In the beginning they don't even think about going to college. By the time the project ends, though, they regard getting a college degree as something positive they want to do."

Killingsworth remembers the first teen mother she mentored. The young woman lived alone, working at a fast-food restaurant to supplement public assistance. "She really loved her child, but often skipped school to be with the baby, which jeopardized both their futures," Killingsworth says. "Once she realized how important education is, she changed her behavior. She graduated from high school, attends classes at a local community college, and hopes to continue on at a university.

"Project Nubia gives her and other teen mothers a future," Killingsworth says. "I'm really proud to help create such a change in someone's life."

—YVONNE GEORGI